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Aug '10

suggested for
mature readers
vertigocomics.com



BECAUSE OF YOU TWO, THE EVIL DWARF IS SLAIN, BREAKING HIS ENCHANTMENT OVER ME AT LONG LAST. NO LONGER AM I A BEAR OF RUDE FIELD AND FOREST.

I'M ONCE MORE A PRINCE OF THE GOLDEN REALM. BRANDISH OF THE MOST NOBLE AND PUISSANT HOUSE OF DESCRY.

NOW WE CAN BE WED, SNOW WHITE, AS I PROMISED.

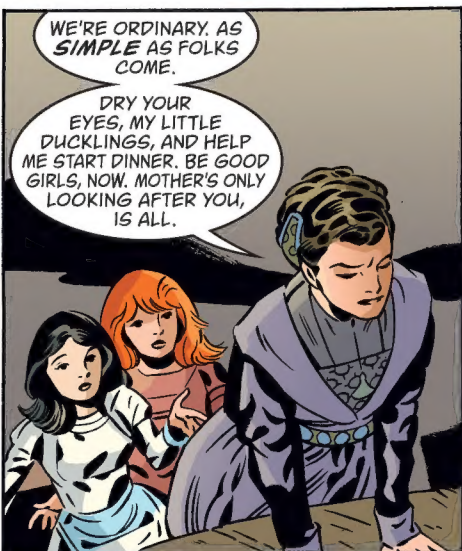
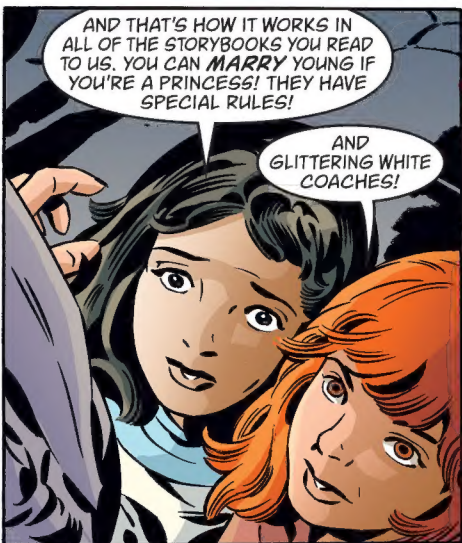
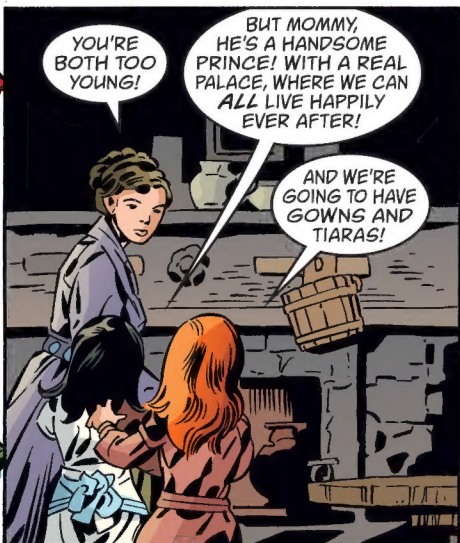
AND I'VE A BROTHER, HOLBEN, ONLY TWO YEARS YOUNGER THAN I, TO MARRY ROSE RED.

WE'RE GOING TO BE PRINCESSES?

WITH GOWNS AND TIARAS AND GLITTERING WHITE COACHES? TRULY AND FOR REAL?

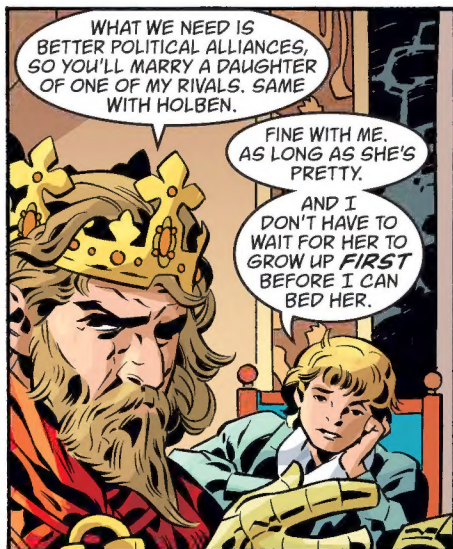
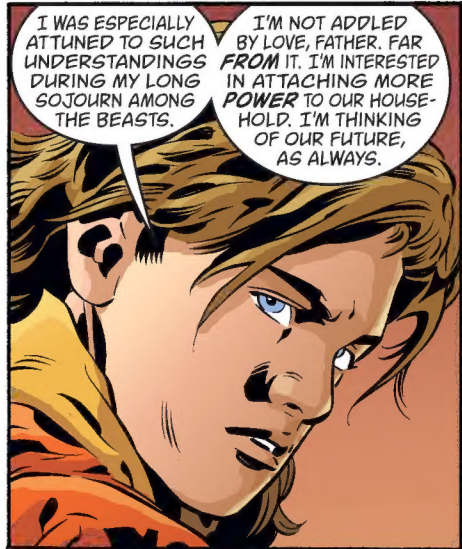
Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

Chapter Three of Rose Red



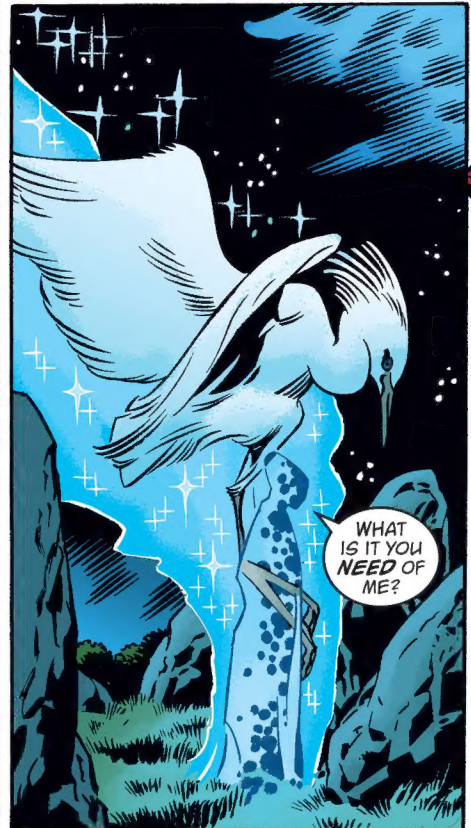
Meanwhile, far across the great and magical forest...













THIS BUSINESS BETWEEN MY SON AND YOUR DAUGHTER, IT **MUST** BE STOPPED.

IT'S ALREADY WELL ENDED. I'VE PUT SUCH NOTIONS RIGHT OUT OF THEIR HEADS. I PROPOSE YOU DO THE **SAME** WITH YOUR SONS.



I WON'T HAVE YOU WEIRDS, YOU WITCHY PEOPLE FROM THE WOODS, CONTAMINATING OUR **NOBLE** BLOODLINE.

NOR WILL WE TRY, AS I'VE JUST SAID.



AH, BUT IT ISN'T THAT EASY, IS IT? I DON'T WORRY ABOUT MY SECOND SON AND YOUR OTHER DAUGHTER, SINCE HE NEVER ACTUALLY **PROMISED** ANYTHING.

BUT MY OLDEST, BRANDISH, SPOKE A VOW. A DAMNED FOOLISH ONE, BUT A **VOW** JUST THE SAME.



AND THE PROMISES OF GREAT PRINCES CAN'T BE **EASILY** BROKEN, WITHOUT DIRE CONSEQUENCES.

I UNDERSTAND THERE ARE SPECIAL DOOMS SET ASIDE FOR OATHBREAKERS IN THE NEXT LIFE. GREAT CAULDRONS WHERE THEY'RE BOILED AND EATEN BY GIANT WITCH DOGS EVERY DAY.



I CAN'T ALLOW THAT. HOW CAN I?

WHAT FURTHER **REMEDY** WOULD YOU ASK, THEN?



IF THE GIRL DIED, BY ACCIDENT SAY, THEN MY SON WOULD BE OFF THE HOOK.

YOU'LL STILL HAVE ONE DAUGHTER TO LOVE AND CARE FOR. A **SIMPLE** WOMAN CAN BE HAPPY WITH THAT.



SNOW, WAKE UP.

HMMMM?

YOU NEED TO GET UP NOW, CHILD, BUT SOFT AS A WHISPER. DON'T WAKE YOUR SISTER.



COME WITH ME NOW, BUT QUIETLY.

I'M SORRY, MY LOVE, BUT YOU CAN TAKE NOTHING WITH YOU EXCEPT WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE ON.



WHERE ARE WE GOING, MOTHER?

HUSH NOW. I'LL EXPLAIN ALL LATER, IF I CAN. WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW NOW IS THERE'S DANGER TO US ALL TONIGHT, BUT MOSTLY TO YOU.



YOU'LL HAVE TO LEAVE US, SNOW, AND GO FAR AWAY, TO LIVE WITH MY SISTER, WHO'S GOING TO BE YOUR *NEW* MOTHER FOREVER AND EVER.

NO! I CAN'T LEAVE YOU! I CAN'T LEAVE ROSE!



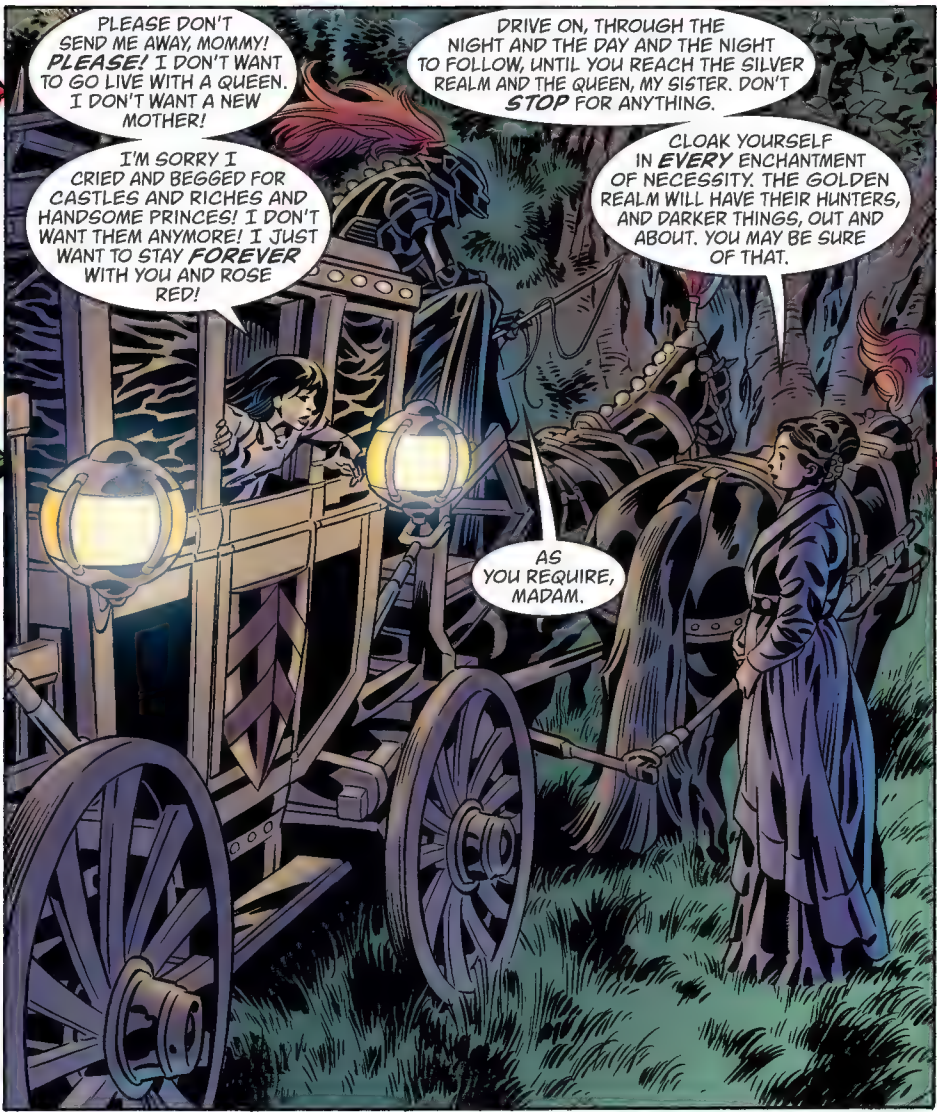
"I MADE ALL THE ARRANGEMENTS. YOU'LL BE WELL CARED FOR."

BECAUSE YOU OWE ME THIS, SISTER, AND MUCH *MORE* BESIDES. I HELPED YOU NET YOUR KING TO THE EAST AND HIS SILVER REALM.



VERY WELL, DEAR SISTER. I'LL TAKE YOUR **CASTOFF** RAGAMUFFIN AS MY OWN AND LOVE HER DEARLY. I'LL HIDE AND PROTECT HER FROM THE KING TO THE WEST.

BUT THEN ALL OUR DEBTS ARE PAID.



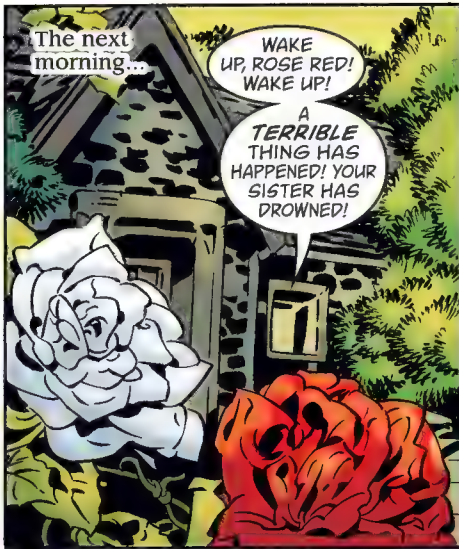
PLEASE DON'T SEND ME AWAY, MOMMY! **PLEASE!** I DON'T WANT TO GO LIVE WITH A QUEEN. I DON'T WANT A NEW MOTHER!

I'M SORRY I CRIED AND BEGGED FOR CASTLES AND RICHES AND HANDSOME PRINCES! I DON'T WANT THEM ANYMORE! I JUST WANT TO STAY **FOREVER** WITH YOU AND ROSE RED!

DRIVE ON, THROUGH THE NIGHT AND THE DAY AND THE NIGHT TO FOLLOW, UNTIL YOU REACH THE SILVER REALM AND THE QUEEN, MY SISTER. DON'T **STOP** FOR ANYTHING.

CLOAK YOURSELF IN **EVERY** ENCHANTMENT OF NECESSITY. THE GOLDEN REALM WILL HAVE THEIR HUNTERS, AND DARKER THINGS, OUT AND ABOUT. YOU MAY BE SURE OF THAT.

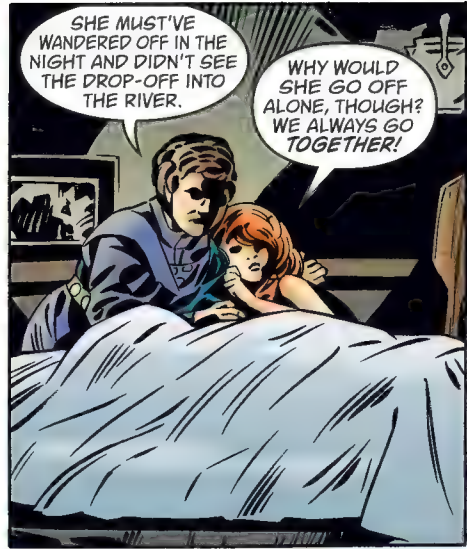
AS YOU REQUIRE, MADAM.



The next morning...

WAKE UP, ROSE RED! WAKE UP!

A TERRIBLE THING HAS HAPPENED! YOUR SISTER HAS DROWNED!



SHE MUST'VE WANDERED OFF IN THE NIGHT AND DIDN'T SEE THE DROP-OFF INTO THE RIVER.

WHY WOULD SHE GO OFF ALONE, THOUGH? WE ALWAYS GO TOGETHER!



YOU MAY CHECK UNDER THE SHROUD, IF YOU MUST, BUT PLEASE TAKE CARE NOT TO LET MY SURVIVING DAUGHTER SEE AUGHT.

THE FISH, AND MAYBE EVEN SOME DEEPER CREATURES, GOT TO HER BODY BEFORE I COULD FIND HER.

NO NEED, MAAM. I CAN SEE YOUR *SORROW* IS REAL.

I'LL REPORT THIS TRAGEDY STRAIGHTAWAY TO OUR KING, WHO WILL NO DOUBT SHARE YOUR GRIEF.

Once upon a time there was a Queen of a great realm, who was also a woman of the craft. She was lovely but proud.

WHEN THE KING, MY HUSBAND, PERISHED, ALL THIS BECAME MINE, BUT NOW I WONDER IF IT'S ENOUGH.



She'd inherited a daughter named Snow White who had skin as pale as new-fallen snow, hair as dark as a raven's secret heart, and lips as red as spilled blood.

ROSE RED.

ROSE RED.



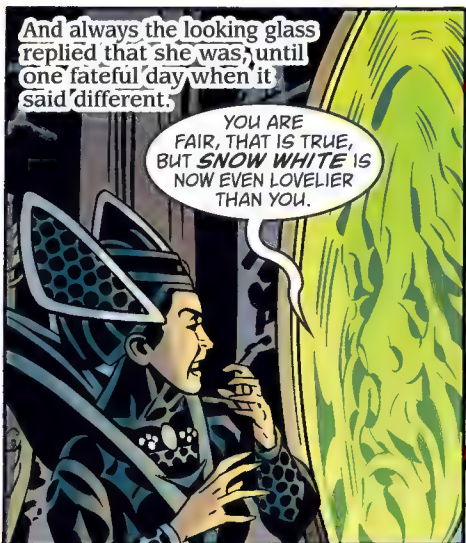
Every day, the Queen would consult her magic looking glass.

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL, WHO IN THIS LAND IS FAIREST OF ALL?



And always the looking glass replied that she was, until one fateful day when it said different.

YOU ARE FAIR, THAT IS TRUE, BUT SNOW WHITE IS NOW EVEN LOVELIER THAN YOU.




And true it was, for Snow White had grown in both years and beauty. The Queen was enraged at this usurpation.

I WAS PROMISED TO A HANDSOME PRINCE ONCE. AT LEAST I THINK SO. THE MEMORY SEEMS MORE LIKE A DREAM NOW.

DID HE KISS YOU?

OR SLAY SOME FEARSOME MONSTER TO WIN YOUR HEART?





The wicked Queen called for her huntsman to drag Snow White away, into the deep, dark forest, where many terrible deeds can be concealed.

BUT WHERE ARE WE GOING?


WHY ARE YOU HANDLING ME SO RUDELY?



THE QUEEN, YOUR MOTHER, HAS COMMANDED YOUR DEATH.


I'M TO BRING HER YOUR HEART AS PROOF, OR A PRIZE. WHO CAN SAY WHICH WITH HER?

BUT YOU CAN'T DO THAT TO ME! I'M A PRINCESS!



IT GRIEVES ME SORE TO DO IT, YOUNG LADY, BUT I *MUST*, THOUGH YOU'VE NEVER BEEN ANYTHING BUT SWEET TO ME.

YOUR MOTHER IS POWERFUL AND UNFORGIVING.



Snow White pled for her life, and in time the huntsman's heart was moved!

FINE. I'LL SPARE YOU MY KNIFE, BUT I'M DOING YOU NO FAVORS, GIRL. IT WOULD BE FAR KINDER TO DO IT QUICKLY NOW.

THIS FOREST WILL END YOU, CERTAIN.

THANK YOU! I'LL RUN AND HIDE AND NEVER COME BACK!

The huntsman substituted the heart of a pig to present to the Queen and she was none the wiser.



LOVELY.

PERFECT.

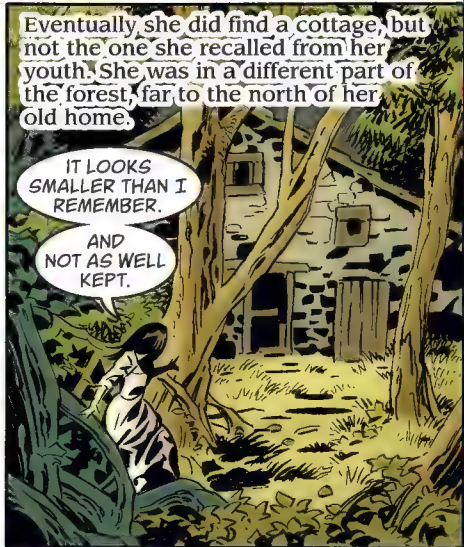
Dimly the unhappy princess recalled a cottage somewhere in these great woods—a place of simple comfort and refuge.



Eventually, she did find a cottage, but not the one she recalled from her youth. She was in a different part of the forest, far to the north of her old home.

IT LOOKS SMALLER THAN I REMEMBER.

AND NOT AS WELL KEPT.



This was not a good place, but the sweet and innocent Snow didn't know it. This part of the vast forest wasn't bound by strong bargains to keep her from harm.



HELLO?

By simple fate or evil purpose,
Snow fell into the clutches of
the seven sons of the wicked
dwarf of her youthful
adventures.

They treated her
badly and she
was with them
for many hard
months.

SCRUB
HARDER,
GIRL!

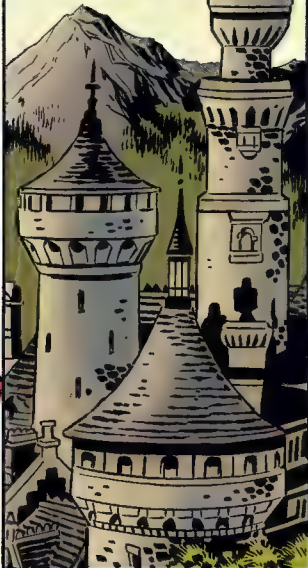
THIS IS
WORK TIME, LAZY-
BONES, NOT PLAYTIME!
THAT COMES
LATER!

IT
WILL! IT SURELY
WILL! MY TURN
TONIGHT!



In time the Queen learned the truth about her adopted daughter.

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL, WHO IN THIS LAND IS FAIREST OF ALL?



IN THIS LAND IT'S YOU, OH DARK AND WICKED QUEEN.

BUT JUST BEYOND THIS LAND IS THE FAIREST I HAVE SEEN.

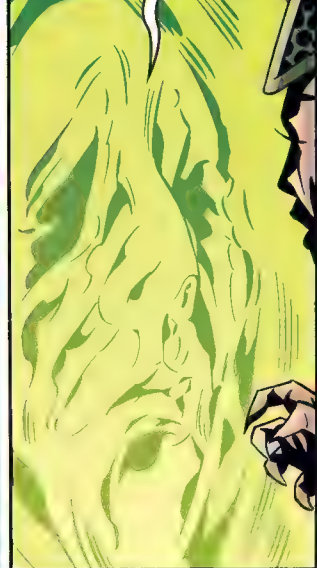
WHAT?!

HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE?



YOUR SCHEME WAS THWARTED. YOUR MURDERER LIED...

...WHEN HE REPORTED THAT THE PRINCESS, SNOW WHITE, HAD DIED.



The Queen could not abide this news. Cloaking herself in the guise of an old woman, she visited the girl in her cottage.

I'M SO SORRY I CAN'T SHOW YOU MORE HOSPITALITY, OLD WOMAN. BUT I'VE EVER SO MANY CHORES TO COMPLETE BEFORE THE DWARFS RETURN.

STILL, YOU CAN PAUSE LONG ENOUGH TO EAT A LOVELY APPLE, MY DEAR.

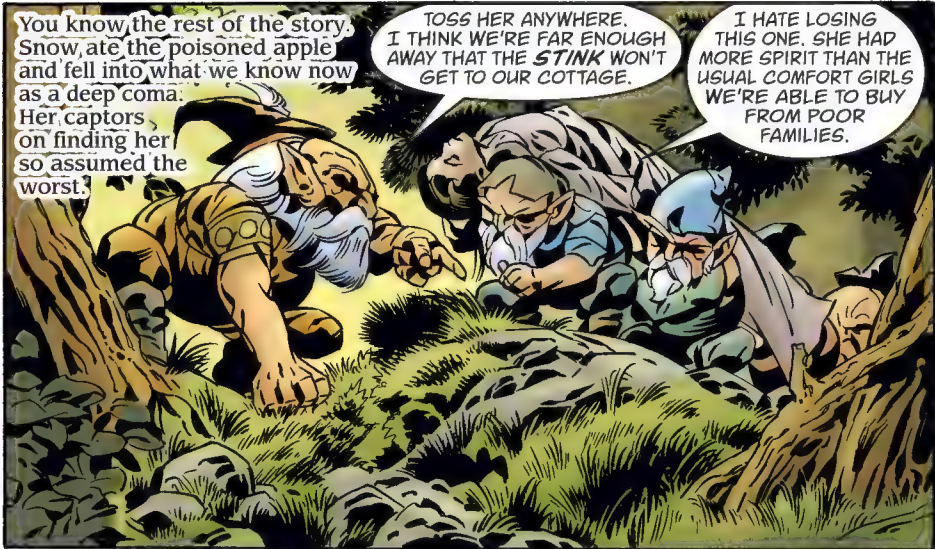
IT WILL GIVE YOU THE STRENGTH TO DO YOUR WORK MORE BRISKLY. YOUR COMPANIONS CAN'T BUT APPRECIATE THAT, CAN THEY?



You know the rest of the story. Snow ate the poisoned apple and fell into what we know now as a deep coma. Her captors, on finding her so assumed the worst.

TOSS HER ANYWHERE. I THINK WE'RE FAR ENOUGH AWAY THAT THE STINK WON'T GET TO OUR COTTAGE.

I HATE LOSING THIS ONE. SHE HAD MORE SPIRIT THAN THE USUAL COMFORT GIRLS WE'RE ABLE TO BUY FROM POOR FAMILIES.



WHAT DO YOU THINK COULD HAVE KILLED HER?

WHO KNOWS? THESE BRIGHT WORLDERS ARE SO FRAGILE.



SOME OF THEM JUST DON'T LAST LONG ONCE THEY END UP IN DIVERSION CABINS.

COME ALONG, BEFORE SOME BEAST FINDS US.



And had she been left there, she would surely have died, food for scavengers. But someone else found her first.

WHO CAN THIS BE?

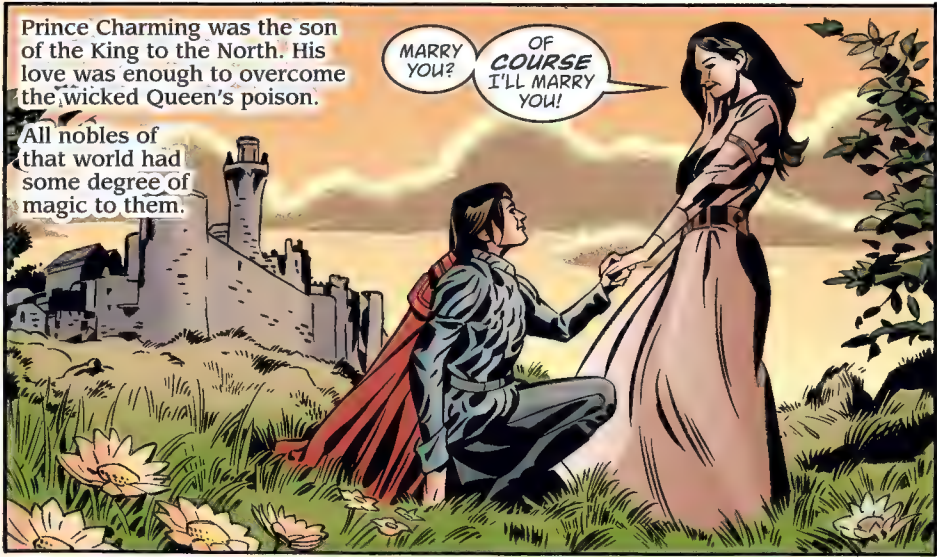


Prince Charming was the son of the King to the North. His love was enough to overcome the wicked Queen's poison.

All nobles of that world had some degree of magic to them.

MARRY YOU?

OF COURSE I'LL MARRY YOU!



And unlike the King to the West, Charming's father wasn't against a marriage of the heart.

THIS WILL BE A CAPITAL MATCH!

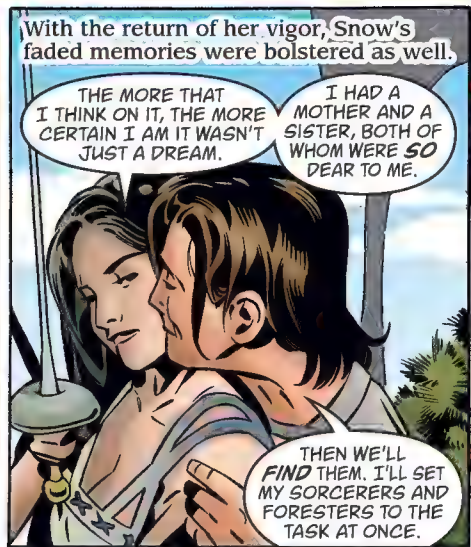
CAPITAL!



With the return of her vigor, Snow's faded memories were bolstered as well.

THE MORE THAT I THINK ON IT, THE MORE CERTAIN I AM IT WASN'T JUST A DREAM.

I HAD A MOTHER AND A SISTER, BOTH OF WHOM WERE SO DEAR TO ME.



THEN WE'LL FIND THEM. I'LL SET MY SORCERERS AND FORESTERS TO THE TASK AT ONCE.

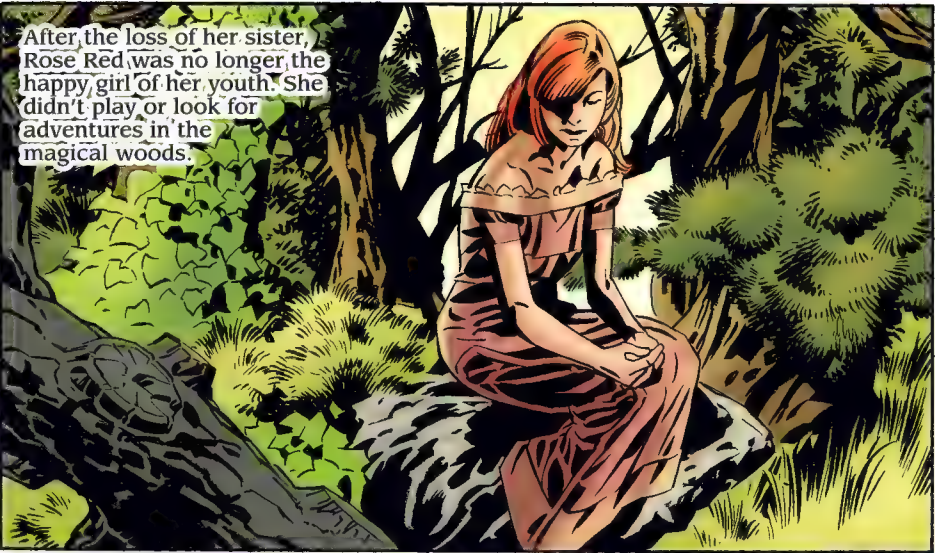
And that's how a message eventually made its way, through many diverse hands, to the doorstep of Snow's original home.

TELL ME AGAIN, GOOD FELLOW!

AND THIS TIME DON'T LEAVE A SINGLE DETAIL OUT!



After the loss of her sister, Rose Red was no longer the happy girl of her youth. She didn't play or look for adventures in the magical woods.



And the woods, sensing her sorrow, left her alone for the most part.



Ensorcelled princes, in the forms of foxes, lions, trolls, dragons, frogs and badgers, looked elsewhere for their rescue and restoration.



I DON'T THINK SHE'LL DO.

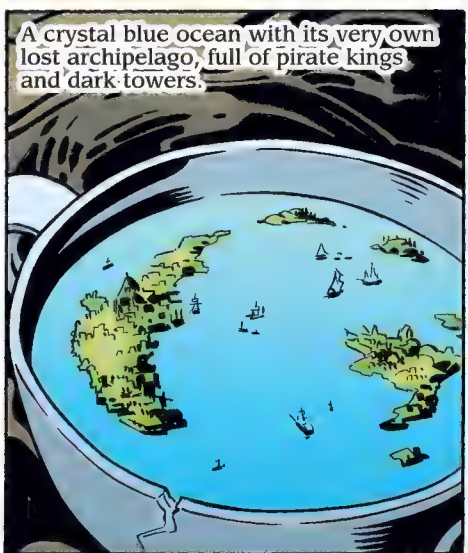
NO, SHE'S GOT MAGIC IN HER, TRUE AND SURE. BUT NO SPARK. NOT A BIT OF A SPARK.

She missed an absolutely lovely thing that might have happened with a magic teacup that contained an entire watery world in it.



NOT HER. TOO BAD. STEADY ON, THEN.

A crystal blue ocean with its very own lost archipelago, full of pirate kings and dark towers.





She was bypassed entirely by the delegation of faery ambassadors seeking after a warrior princess to save their realm.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, COUNT BRISTLETRUMPET. SHE WAS PERFECT. I CAN STILL FEEL THE POWER IN HER FROM HERE.

NO, GOOSEFERN, SHE WON'T DO. WE CAN'T SAVE A DYING REALM WITH A CHAMPION WHO'S FADING AWAY HERSELF.



Only one impossible thing could wake Rose R d from her sorrow! But sometimes impossible things are entirely possible, if there's magic enough in the world.

OH, THERE YOU ARE!

COME QUICK, ROSE RED! I HAVE EXCITING NEWS!



SHE WAS NEVER KILLED. THAT WAS JUST A STORY I HAD TO TELL TO COVER UP THE TRUTH.

YOUR SISTER IS A PRINCESS NOW IN A FAR LAND. AND SHE WANTS YOU TO COME LIVE WITH HER. ISN'T THAT LOVELY?

ALIVE?



ALL THIS TIME, AND SHE NEVER TOLD ME?

Once upon a time, Rose Red, a lovely girl of humble birth, who never became a princess, did in time become the sister of a princess. And that was nearly as grand and wondrous.

Right?

YONDER IS THE PALACE, DEAR LADY. JOURNEY'S END AND YOUR NEW HOME.

ARE YOU EXCITED, LADY ROSE?



EXCITED, SIR JERRETH?

NO--MORE LIKE DETERMINED. TIME TO SET SOME THINGS ARIGHT.



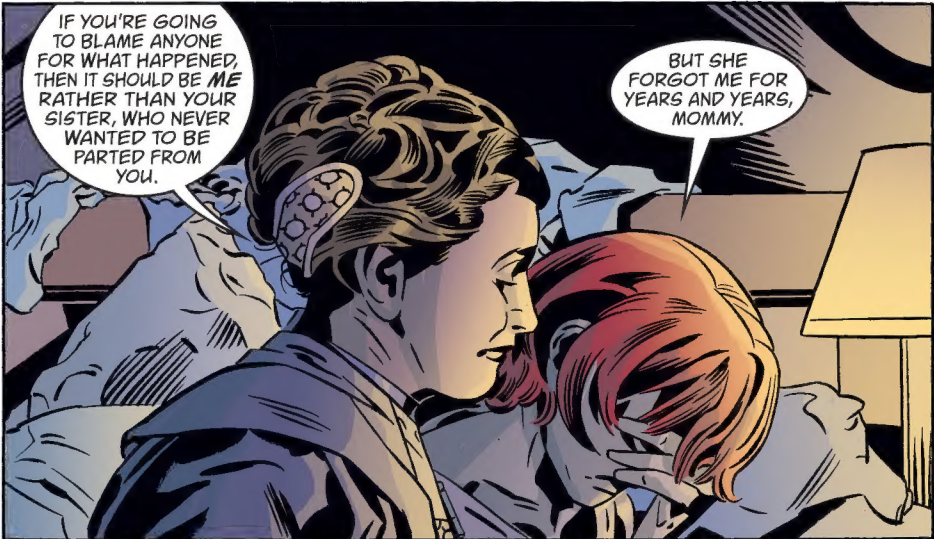


THE FARM.

SO YOU SEE, MY SAD DUCKLING, SNOW NEVER LEFT YOU OF HER OWN WILL.

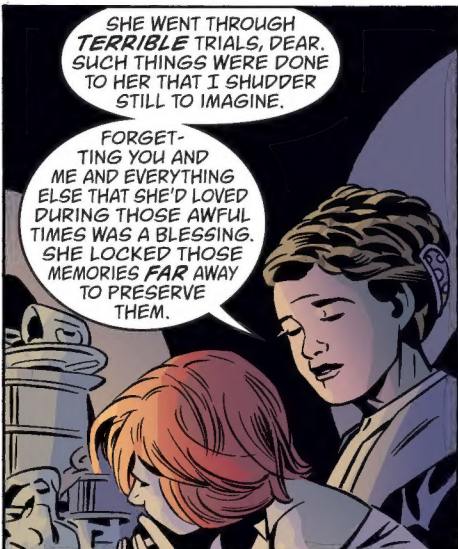


THERE WERE SINISTER POWERS AT LARGE IN THE WORLD BACK THEN, AND AT THE TIME SHE'D NO CHOICE BUT TO ABANDON YOU.



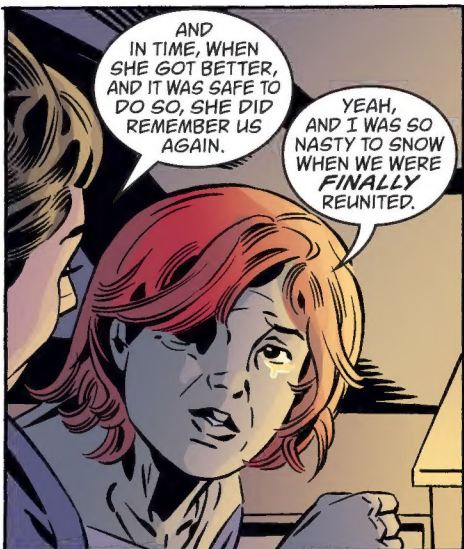
IF YOU'RE GOING TO BLAME ANYONE FOR WHAT HAPPENED, THEN IT SHOULD BE ME RATHER THAN YOUR SISTER, WHO NEVER WANTED TO BE PARTED FROM YOU.

BUT SHE FORGOT ME FOR YEARS AND YEARS, MOMMY.



SHE WENT THROUGH TERRIBLE TRIALS, DEAR. SUCH THINGS WERE DONE TO HER THAT I SHUDDER STILL TO IMAGINE.

FORGETTING YOU AND ME AND EVERYTHING ELSE THAT SHE'D LOVED DURING THOSE AWFUL TIMES WAS A BLESSING. SHE LOCKED THOSE MEMORIES FAR AWAY TO PRESERVE THEM.



AND IN TIME, WHEN SHE GOT BETTER, AND IT WAS SAFE TO DO SO, SHE DID REMEMBER US AGAIN.

YEAH, AND I WAS SO NASTY TO SNOW WHEN WE WERE FINALLY REUNITED.

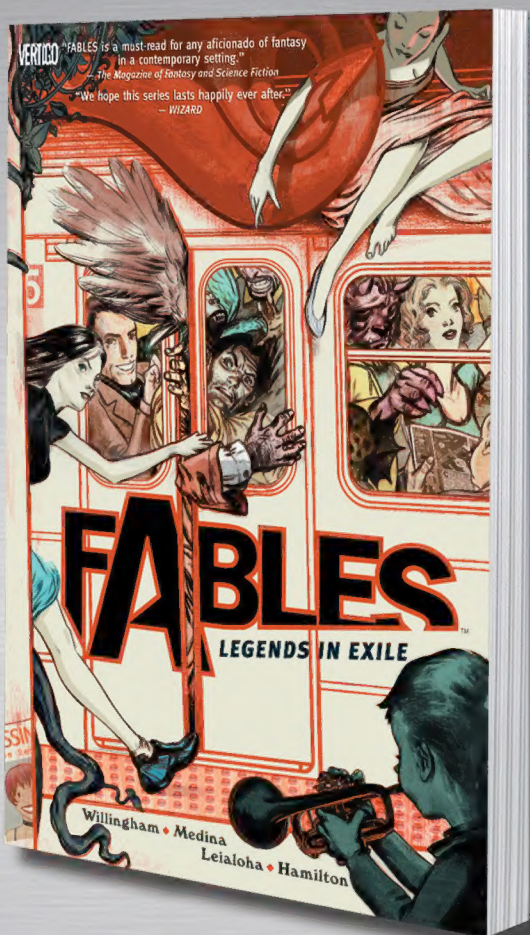
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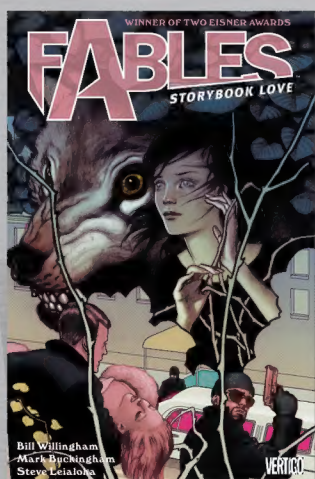
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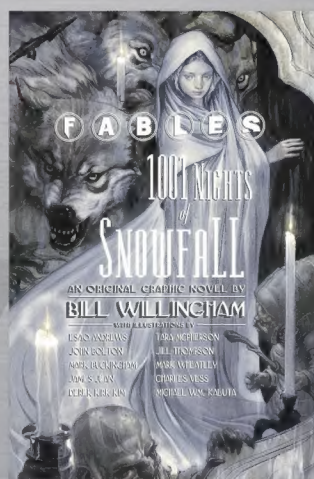
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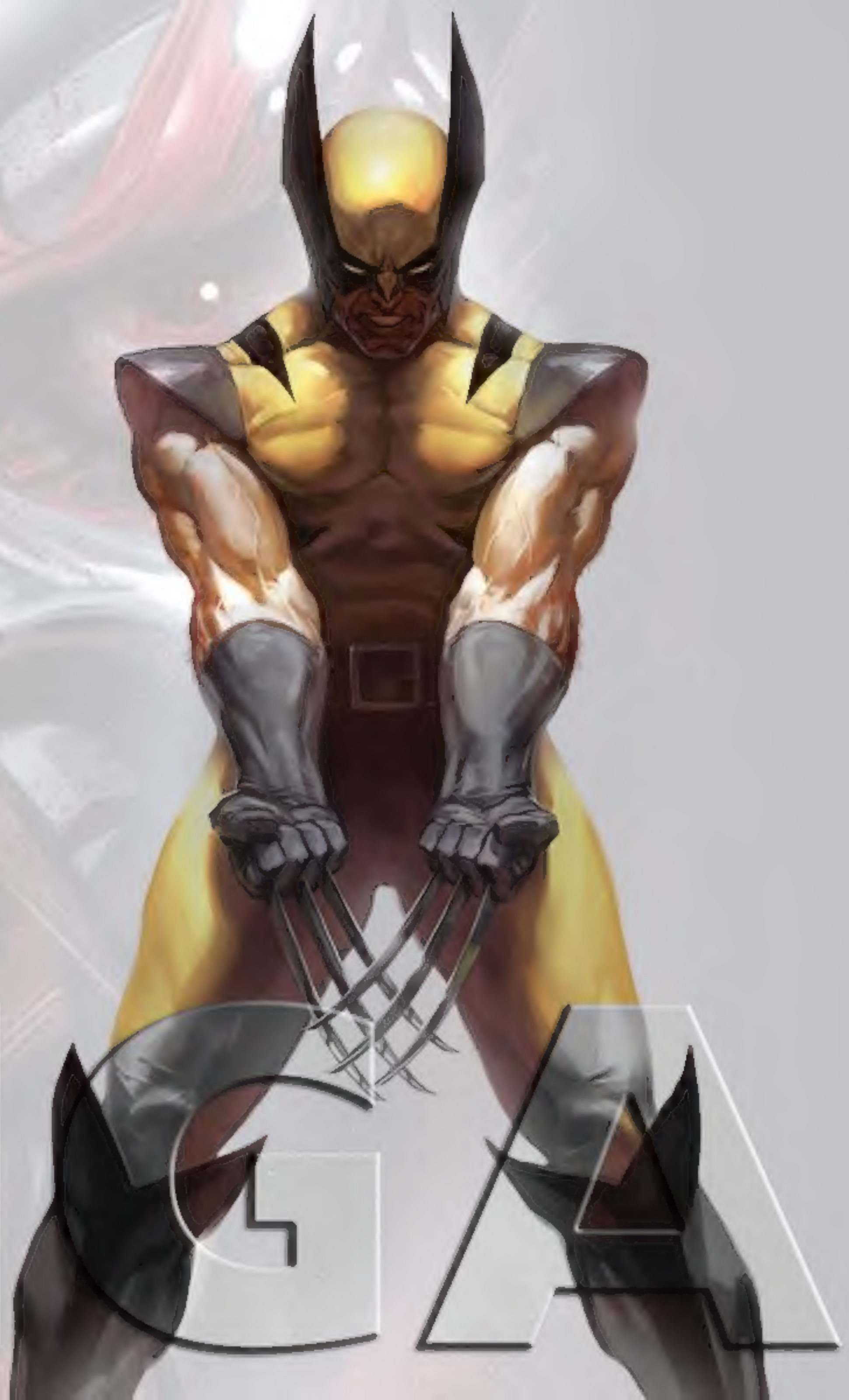


FABLES:
1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



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